

# The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at [www.seapn.org.uk](http://www.seapn.org.uk) and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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## Did you see ...?

### ***Museums Journal***

The latest issue<sup>1</sup> includes:

- Geraldine Kendall Adams “War crimes” (“Analysis” column), which, based on the experience in Ukraine, looks at the targeting of heritage as part of modern warfare [pp8-9]
- Simon Stephens “Citizens’ advice” (“Analysis” column), which looks briefly at the growth of citizens’ juries [p10]
- Pawel Sawicki “Auschwitz must inform our moral choices” (“Comment” column), the first in a new series of articles from outside the UK, which highlights the key mission of the Auschwitz Memorial – to commemorate victims [p17]
- “Museums Change Lives Awards 2024”, articles about the winning entries [pp24-28]<sup>2</sup>
- Simon Stephens “What have we here?”, which looks at Hew Locke’s work, and particularly his exhibition at the BM [pp30-33]
- Angharad Brading “Access all areas” (“In Practice” column), which looks at how accessible interpretation at Wroxeter Roman City<sup>3</sup> was developed [p63]

### ***The School Librarian***

The latest issue<sup>4</sup> includes:

- Katie Dancey-Downs “How can we stop book bans?” [“Feature” article] [pp6-7], which gives more information about the Index on Censorship research into censorship in UK school libraries.<sup>5</sup> It highlights a number of key issues, including whether it helps or hinders to publish lists of books being banned; the fact that many school library staff wanted to remain anonymous – with the exception of Alice Leggatt – and the difficulty in assessing just how widespread censorship is; and that “[...] the vast majority [of books] are being pulled from the shelves because of LGBTQ+ content. Requests are coming mostly from parents but in some cases teachers or leadership team members are pulling books from libraries in anticipation of the perceived offence they might cause.” [p6] The article challenges school librarians to take some next steps ...

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<sup>1</sup> *Museums Journal*, Jan/Feb 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Further info on the Awards – with weblinks etc – can be found in *Network Newsletter* 281, <https://seapn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Newsletter-NS-281.pdf>, pp 6-9.

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/wroxeter-roman-city/>.

<sup>4</sup> *The School Librarian*, 72 (4), Winter 2024.

<sup>5</sup> There is brief coverage of this in *The Network Newsletter*, 278, Apr 2024, <https://seapn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Newsletter-NS-278.pdf>, pp3-4,

- Katy Lewis “Losing yourself in a book can change your life” [“Feature” article] [pp10-11], which reports briefly on the Penguin Books “Lit in Colour” promotion<sup>6</sup> and introduces the important evaluation research report<sup>7</sup>.

### **ARC Magazine**

The latest issue<sup>8</sup> includes:

- Daniel Williams “Archives in Prison”, which describes some of their work with HMP Grendon, including running three LGBTQ+ research-based workshops. The article also has “Top Tips” [pp24-25]

### **Books for Keeps**

The latest issue<sup>9</sup> includes:

- “Moving beyond the Secret Garden”, in which Patrice Lawrence interviews Karen Sands-O’Connor and Darren Chetty about their long-running column in *Books for Keeps*, and also their new book<sup>10</sup> which draws on and expands the column [pp22-23]
- Darren Chetty and Karen Sands-O’Connor “Beyond the Secret Garden: Growing up away from Birth Parents, Part one – books published before the 21st century”, which looks at look at representations of lone children of colour [p24-25]

### **An Leabharlann, The Irish Library**

The issue for 4 Apr includes a very important article<sup>11</sup> which “[...] discusses the needs of autistic teenagers with low support needs and how best to cultivate and promote inclusivity in libraries to better serve this vulnerable sector of the community. Librarians should endeavour to understand the difficulties they

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<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.penguin.co.uk/lit-in-colour>.

<sup>7</sup> Victoria Elliott, Danielle Watkis, Benjamin Hart and Kyle Davison. *The effect of studying a text by an author of colour: the Lit in Colour Pioneers Pilot*. Penguin, 2024, <https://wp-stage.penguin.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Lit-in-Colour-Pioneers-Pilot-Report-Full-Final-V12.pdf>. There are also web highlights from the report at: <https://www.penguin.co.uk/lit-in-colour-pioneers-pilot>.

<sup>8</sup> *ARC Magazine*, 402, Jan-Feb 2025.

<sup>9</sup> *Books for Keeps*, 270, Jan 2025, <https://booksforkeeps.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/BfK-270-Jan-2024.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Darren Chetty and Karen Sands-O’Connor. *Beyond the Secret Garden: children’s literature and representations of Black and Racially minoritised people*. English & Media Centre, 2024. Charged-for publication – further info at: <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications-magazines/20807/beyond-the-secret-garden-childrens-literature-and-representations-of-black-and-r/>.

<sup>11</sup> Aisling Smith “Including Autistic Teens In Libraries”, *An Leabharlann, The Irish Library*, 4 Apr 2024, <https://www.libraryassociation.ie/including-autistic-teens-in-libraries/>.

encounter and how to minimize factors that might exacerbate these issues if autistic adolescents are to feel welcome and accepted.”<sup>12</sup>

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## Cost of living crisis/poverty – Other Agencies

### **Poverty in Scotland 2024**

JRF have recently published their latest report<sup>13</sup> which “[...] asks how effective social security is at reducing poverty and advancing equality in Scotland.” [p1]

It makes some important points:

- “The ‘work first’ approach of the previous UK Governments has failed to reduce poverty. While the proportion of low-income households’ income from work has increased, it has increased more slowly than in wealthier households and been paired with a withering of the social security system.

For those most likely to rely on social security, such as single-parent households or households where someone is disabled, this acts to lock them in poverty. And for those out of work, it leaves them with miserable incomes [...]” [p3]

- “There are also worrying signs of people being excluded from the system, with the proportion of people in minority ethnic households in receipt of benefits approximately halving (from 75% to 38%). When paired with increasing poverty amongst this group, this is deeply concerning.” [p4]
- “Perhaps the most shocking findings of this report relate to the support available for disabled people and their families. Non-means tested disability benefits are provided to disabled people to cover the additional costs of being disabled yet being in receipt of those payments increasingly bears the risk of being in poverty.

We show that the poverty rate more than doubles amongst families in receipt of disability payments when those payments are excluded from total household income. We also show that the gap between the poverty rate when these payments are excluded has widened (from 15 percentage points in 2011–14 to 22 percentage points in the latest figures). The impact of this is most grimly summed up by the fact that children and working-age adults in a family where someone is disabled were 3 times as likely to experience combined low-income (below 60% of the median income) and material deprivation, that is, people in poverty reporting they are unable to access key goods and services.” [pp4-5]

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<sup>12</sup> Source: CILIP Online Community, <https://community.cilip.org.uk/>.

<sup>13</sup> Chris Birt, Carla Cebula, Jack Evans, Deborah Hay and Annie McKenzie. *Poverty in Scotland 2024*. JRF, 2024, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs/poverty-in-scotland-2024-a59b5cd28f1bdedc33be2b9a2766c803.pdf>.

- “Ultimately, this report makes the case for restoring our social security system to the investment in people that we all need and deserve. It shows how its failure causes harm and how investment in it can provide everyone with the quality of life, free from poverty, that we all deserve.” [p5]

The report concludes with a series of recommendations:

“This report highlights many weaknesses in the current social security system and underlines how its failures are causing poverty. Our chief recommendations fall into roughly 2 baskets: one, to improve the adequacy of the system and the other, to improve how people who use it experience it.

Those recommendations also split into things that the Scottish and UK Governments should do together and then recommendations for each government in turn.” [p107]

Important background reading.<sup>14</sup>

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## LGBTQ+ issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

### “Historic England have funded a queer history trail and – you guessed it – right-wingers are furious”

According to a recent *PinkNews* story<sup>15</sup>:

“Historic England is being criticised for funding a queer history trail in Norfolk, prompting right-wingers to describe LGBTQ+ identities as ‘controversial’ and claim it ‘creates division.’

The trail in King’s Lynn is part of 21 youth-focused projects across the country which are being funded by Historic England, the public body that looks after England’s historic environment and helps people understand and value it, with grants of up to £15,000 (\$19,000).

Other projects approved for funding include LGBTQ+ history explorations in rural Staffordshire, Gateshead and Stockport, a podcast about a

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<sup>14</sup> Source: JRF *Newsletter*, 28 Oct 2024.

<sup>15</sup> Sophie Perry “Historic England have funded a queer history trail and – you guessed it – right-wingers are furious”, *PinkNews*, 2 Dec 2024, [https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/12/02/historic-england-queer-history-backlash-kings-lynn/?utm\\_content=1733577360&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=instagram&fbclid=IwY2xjawHCPoZleHRuA2FlbQlxMQABHXj1kUxhF82f61qKm\\_qhOj93aRtwuFVGWMaNrSFLr2tZDVXYhxfDbc75g\\_aem\\_84c6ll36A4SFwAm9T6zh0Q&sfnsn=scwspmo&s=09](https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/12/02/historic-england-queer-history-backlash-kings-lynn/?utm_content=1733577360&utm_medium=social&utm_source=instagram&fbclid=IwY2xjawHCPoZleHRuA2FlbQlxMQABHXj1kUxhF82f61qKm_qhOj93aRtwuFVGWMaNrSFLr2tZDVXYhxfDbc75g_aem_84c6ll36A4SFwAm9T6zh0Q&sfnsn=scwspmo&s=09)

mosque in East London, and youngsters with additional needs looking at the social history around the oldest cable tramway in Britain.”<sup>16</sup>

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## Broader issues – Other Agencies

### “Contested heritage” and “Culture wars”

#### Rainbow Laces campaign – a couple of articles

Firstly, in *PinkNews*, “FA sued over Rainbow Laces campaign”<sup>17</sup>, which reports that a Newcastle United fan “[...] has plans to sue the FA, saying that the wearing of rainbow armbands and laces by football players endorses ‘gender ideology’.”

*PinkNews* also carried a thoughtful interview<sup>18</sup> with Zander Murray, “Scotland’s first out gay male professional footballer”, in which he says:

“It’s deeper than a Premier League football player refusing to wear the rainbow armband. This is a problem with the campaign we’ve had for years. Each year people are refusing to contribute.

“I’ve been saying for years – I’m a Stonewall sports champion – that we have to change the wording of the name of the campaign. We need to do less rainbows, and focus more on an anti-homophobia message, rather than telling players to don rainbow kits [and] rainbow armbands.”

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

BM = British Museum

FA = Football Association

JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation

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<sup>16</sup> Source: LinkedIn.

<sup>17</sup> Michele Theil “FA sued over Rainbow Laces campaign”, *PinkNews*, 8 Dec 2024, [https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/12/08/fa-sued-over-rainbow-laces-campaign/?user\\_id=john@nadder.org.uk](https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/12/08/fa-sued-over-rainbow-laces-campaign/?user_id=john@nadder.org.uk).

<sup>18</sup> Sophie Perry “Zander Murray calls for overhaul of Rainbow Laces campaign after players refuse to wear armbands”, *PinkNews*, 5 Dec 2024, <https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/12/05/zander-murray-stonewall-rainbow-laces-football-rainbow-lgbtq/>.